



**Bird Island Reserve
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, November 13, 2013, 1 pm**

Attendance

<u>LAC Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
NC Coastal Land Trust - Jessica Blake	No
NC Coastal Federation - Lauren Kolodij	Yes
Bird Island Preservation Society - Bill Ducker	Yes
Sunset Beach Police Department - Chief Lisa Massey	No
Town of Sunset Beach Administration – Karen Joseph	Yes
<u>Community Members and Community Organization Members</u>	<u>Present</u>
Sue Weddle	Yes
Noelle Kehrberg	Yes
Jim Barber	Yes
Sunset Beach Turtle Patrol - Carmel Zetts	Yes
Cape Fear Audubon - Andy Fairbanks	Yes
<u>Others Present</u>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR, Stewardship Coordinator and Southern Sites Manager	

Reserve-wide Update

Administrative Update

- *Staffing News*
 - Kate Brogan was hired in May 2013 as the Reserve's temporary Communications Specialist. Kate is focusing on the Reserve website, social media, and public relations campaigns related to visitor use at Reserve sites.
 - Marie Davis was also hired in May 2013 as the Reserve's temporary Environmental Educator located in the Wilmington office. Marie is conducting a variety of general public programming in the region, including on-site field trips, public presentations, and a paddling trip.

- Lori Davis, Education Coordinator for the Reserve, recently received the 2013 Environmental Educator of the Year Award from the Environmental Educators of North Carolina.
- *Budget Update*
The Reserve receives funding from both the State of N.C. and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) for operation of the program and a budget update was provided for the current fiscal year. The Reserve's total budget for FY13-14 is \$877,653 (\$265,000 from State appropriations and \$612,653 from NOAA, 90% of the NOAA funds support operation of the N.C. National Estuarine Research Reserve (NCNERR)); this is a \$34,754 reduction in federal funding for operation of the NCNERR and excludes any external competitive grant funds.
- *Rules and Policies Review Process*
The Reserve is not pursuing the update of its rules and policies at this time.

Reserve Communications

Website

- The Reserve is in the process of transferring its website to a new DENR hosting portal. This will help brand the Reserve as part of the Division of Coastal Management and establish consistency between DENR agencies, as well as providing more comprehensive and current information for website visitors in an easy-to-navigate format. The new website will be published in December 2013.
- The Hot Topics section of the current website is updated weekly to announce upcoming events/meetings, review projects and field trips, and establish a consistent "voice" for the Reserve that keeps website visitors excited about our work. The Hot Topics Archive can be found at the following link and will also be available on our new website:
<http://www.nccoastalreserve.net/Resources/Hot-Topics-Archives/225.aspx>

Facebook

- The Reserve has three Facebook pages: Rachel Carson, Masonboro Island, and a general N.C. Coastal Reserve page. Facebook is useful for interacting with visitors and community members that are interested in Reserve activities. Options for liking, sharing, and commenting on our pages mean that Reserve staff can listen to and educate the public in an informal setting.
- The Facebook pages reach hundreds of people each day (range of people viewing a post between July and October 2013 for Rachel Carson: 250-2,200; N.C. Coastal Reserve: 89-1,300; and Masonboro Island: 470-5,000).

Newsletter

- The Reserve redesigned its newsletter, the [Tidal Flat](#). The new version comes directly to your email inbox in a colorful new format. Local advisory committee members should have received a copy of the September 2013 issue via email; please let us know if you did not. The issue is also available on our website. A December newsletter is in development.

Local Advisory Committee Operating Procedures

The Local Advisory Committee (LAC) Operating Procedures document was updated based on input from LAC members and staff, replacing the original version. No substantive changes were recommended by either LAC members or staff and thus, all changes are minor and serve to simplify or clarify without changing process or intent. The document you received is the final updated version with comments inserted to highlight the simplified or clarified language. A final PDF version without the comments will be emailed to committee members in December and posted on the Reserve website. Two updates to note: future committee meeting agendas will include more detail to preview discussion topics and action items will be employed to follow up on recommendations from the meetings as appropriate. Thank you to all committee members who reviewed the document and provided comments.

Site Update and Old Business

Summer walks and steward patrols

The Site Manager expressed gratitude to all of the stewards who participated in these two efforts throughout the summer season. A total of 690 volunteer hours were contributed to these programs. Thanks were also expressed for the NC Coastal Land Trust's willingness to assign their Stanback intern, Alison Fox, to coordinate the educational walks program. This first year of the reinvigorated program was a great success with attendance between 20 and 70 each week. Discussion occurred regarding improvements/additions to the program that should be considered prior to next season: upgraded sound system (Jim Barber has already begun working on this); scavenger hunt or other activity for children; expansion of existing outline to add detail on less familiar topics and focus on several key messages; guest scientists to contribute to the training walk in the spring; and engagement of an environmental education intern to lead part of the on-site program.

Sunset at Sunset report

Two Reserve staff joined Mr. Barber and Mr. Ducker at the Sunset at Sunset festival to provide information regarding the Reserve program, the site and the Bird Island Preservation Society. Two hundred and forty-five people were engaged throughout the day.

New Business

Spring work day

The Site Manager suggested scheduling a date in the early spring to do a general clean-up, as well as install some site markers or rules signs in areas not currently marked. April 11th from 10 am-3 pm was chosen as the date for the effort. All BIPS and community volunteers are welcome to participate.

Educational trail/boardwalk discussion

Mr. Barber requested further discussion regarding the potential of installing a boardwalk to provide some access to the marsh and sound portions of the Reserve for educational purposes. Discussion of several potential sites occurred. Several interested members – Ms. Kehrberg, Mr. Barber, Mr. Ducker, and Mr. Fairbanks – will conduct a site visit with the Site Manager early in 2014 to consider possible locations. Preliminary steps that will need to be completed prior to

pursuing funding: define the purpose of the structure, consider the potential benefits and impacts of the structure, and research costs.

Offshore wind

This item, requested by Ms. Weddle, was postponed for discussion.

Member Roundtable (with Reserve staff response in italics)

- Ms. Weddle reported on the recent public meeting related to proposed changes to the inlet hazard area associated with the previous Mad Inlet. During discussion the LAC members agreed that additional written comments would be provided to the Division expressing the committee members' concerns that the proposed change is not founded on scientific evidence and does not take impacts to the Reserve property into account. *The Site Manager encouraged the members to utilize the public comment process, whether providing comments as individual community members or as a group, as the best way to have their thoughts considered in the decision making process.*

Meeting Follow Up and Action Items

- Proposed meeting dates for 2014 are April 7 at 1 pm at the Center for Marine Science and October 21 at 1 pm at the Sunset Beach Town Hall (Fall meeting was originally proposed for November 10.)
- Site Manager to schedule site visit in early 2014 to explore possible boardwalk locations.
- Site Manager to work with Reserve education staff on appropriate activity for children attending weekly walks.
- Site Manager to work with Ms. Blake to determine a plan for expanding the walk outline.
- Site Manager to work with Ms. Blake on including scientists in the training walk in early spring.